

Tips to Informal Caregivers
on Giving Personal Care

Signs and Symptoms of Problems

Signs and symptoms that may indicate problems and call for professional attention:

- **Skeletal and Muscular Systems:** swelling ligaments and limbs around joints; grimacing as the person moves; slow movements; bruising of the skin, or whiteness, shiny, red or hot areas over a swollen joint; loss of strength, sensitivity to touch.
- **Skin:** color change; swelling; texture change; clamminess or moist to the touch; dry, oily, white, scaly patches; markings such as moles, scars or warts; temperature changes; sores, wounds, lumps; odor; hair condition - oily, dry, brittle, infestations and loss; scalp - scaly, dandruff, red.
- **Circulatory Systems:** swelling of ankles and feet; blue or white color of the nailbeds, lips, feet, or hands; swelling or hard knots in the lymph nodes of the neck, groin or in the armpit; changes in the pulse rate - faster, slower, irregular, weak or strong.
- **Respiratory System:** sudden change in respiratory rate; breathing - difficult, shallow, or noisy; cough; sputum - white, yellow, odor, thick or liquid; nose - stopped up, bleeding, dry, draining; throat - sore, red or white spots, swollen tonsils, difficulty in swallowing.
- **Digestive System:** mouth and tongue - red, swollen, spotted, bad breath; diseased or bleeding gums; lined or coated tongue; cracks at the corner of the mouth. Stomach - bloated, nausea or vomiting; refusal to eat or poor appetite; excessive thirst. Intestines - bloated. cramping. Rectum - diarrhea; black, clay-colored or blood-tinged stool; pain when moving bowels.
- **Nervous System:** shaking of limbs or the body, eyes - sensitive to light; dull, bright, teary, bloodshot, yellowish, moist or glassy; ears - discharge; person pulling at his ear (as with pain); slowness in reacting; cannot awaken the person easily after a head injury.
- **Urinary System:** urine yellow, rust-colored, red, with sediment; frequent urination; difficult to start

stream; small or large amount of urine with an urgent feeling to urinate; dribbling; incomplete bladder drainage.

- **Reproductive System:** vaginal discharge - green, yellow or white color; cheesy consistency; watery, odor. Breasts - lump or thickening; nipple discharge; swelling; change in contour. Penis - yellow or white discharge. Testicles - lumps or swelling.
- **Endocrine System:** signs will be reflected in other systems, such as increased amount of fluid intake, frequent urination, dry skin and mood changes.
- **Behavior:** Overall personality does not change with age. However, the following behavior or mood changes should be noted if not a part of a person's normal personality: overly critical, irritable, withdrawn, demanding, abusive, crying, aggressive, listless, hostile, anxious, sullen, depressed.

The above statements are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. You should always consult with your physician about any health and lifestyle concerns or issues you may have.